

Florida House of Representatives

Representative Janet Cruz

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Health & Human
Services Committee

Health Care
Appropriations
Subcommittee

Insurance & Banking
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STAFF:

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Sheila Lincks
District Assistant

February 24, 2011

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service Lifeline and Link Up
CC Docket No. 96-45; WC Docket 03-109**

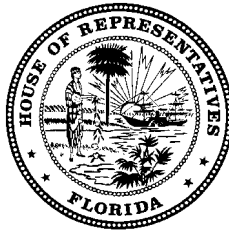
Dear Chairman Genachowski,

I am writing today to commend the efforts of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service and Lifeline and Link Up. As I am sure you agree, I believe the Lifeline program provides an invaluable service to low-income constituents in my district and across the country. I am glad the Board has decided to look for ways to minimize fraud, waste and abuse in the program so that deserving and qualified families will still have access to this important program.

As our nation struggles to overcome unemployment and other economic challenges, the Lifeline program is more invaluable than ever. Reports both academic and anecdotal have shown that access to phone service leads to greater chances of employment. And my district, and our nation's, residents should be able to access these services in the case of an emergency.

I agree wholeheartedly with the Board's recommendations that the Commission put together a plan for uniformity on areas that would apply to all Eligible Telecommunications Carriers (ETCs) that would help eliminate waste and abuse in this program. In doing so, however, I want to make sure that low-income support of the fund remains strong. This is such a beneficial program to my district's residents my concern is that it remain accessible and free to those who qualify.

Low-income support is cyclical and this should be acknowledged. As you may be aware, unemployment has grown in my state since 2008 and those eligible for SNAP assistance has grown. In these challenging economic times, programs such as Lifeline have a real and tangible impact on the lives of my constituents and I would like the Commission to recognize this, as I believe



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they do. As this recession begins to recede, the numbers of those eligible for Lifeline should also drop accordingly.

I urge the Commission to adopt the recommendations from the Federal-State Joint Board, as I would like to see these programs be sustainable in the short and long-term. My only concern is that the Commission should not adopt policies that cap funding for low-income support or hinder competition in an already underserved market. For example, the FCC should not mandate (even minimal) monthly subscriber fees for Lifeline users, which would present an undue administrative burden on both carriers and consumers. The best approach to curtailing fraud and abuse is establishment of an eligibility database.

Thank you for your service to my constituents and this country. I look forward to seeing your proposed changes to strengthen these vital programs.

Sincerely,

Janet Cruz

Janet Cruz
State Representative